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ELSIE
AND OTHER
POEMS

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BY
ROBERT BEVERLY HALE.
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



ELSIE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
ROBERT BEVERLY HALE



BOSTON
R. B. HALE & CO.
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1893



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Astor Place, New York

TO
MRS. A. D. W.,
FOR WHOSE
SYMPATHETIC APPRECIATION
NO ONE
EVER HOPED IN VAIN,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

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ELSIE.

THERE she goes beneath the trees

In her wide-brimmed summer hat

And the butterflies and bees

Wonder what she's laughing at.

On her dress the sun and shade

Play at restless hide and seek,

And the blushes glow and fade

On her tempting little cheek.

Listen ! Who was that she heard

Calling from across the lawn ?

Off she flutters like a bird :

In an instant she is gone.

O'er my sense she's cast a spell.

Like a prisoner I seem,

In some gloomy dungeon cell,

When he sees a stray sunbeam

Through the grating make its way,

Play about upon the wall,

Disappear. Like him I say :

Yes, God is good after all !

SOLO AND SYMPHONY.

THE hall is hushed. Beneath his skilful fingers

The violoncello trembles—makes a pause ;

The tune grows boisterous—softens—barely
lingers,

Then dies away in torrents of applause.

He bows and smiles, and sinks into the
chorus.

His part is done—we think of him no
more ;

But as the glorious symphony steals o'er us

We all forget what seemed so sweet be-
fore.

So I have stood before a world admiring,
Doing great deeds as though they were of
course ;
Envy or love, wonder, at least, inspiring ;
A dumb world marvelling at my *tours de*
force ;

And now once more I sink into the chorus.

What matter if my solo be forgot ?
This symphony forever sweeping o'er us
Is grander far than solos, is it not ?

Hark, how we play ! Let no man fail his fellow !

Never one jar of instruments at strife !
Nor one false note from my unheeded 'cello
To mar the splendid symphony of life !

TWO SERMONS.

WHILE the minister is preaching
 (Very learned talk, no doubt),
And the flock that he is teaching
 Wonder what it's all about,

My strained senses slowly wander
 To the earth from things divine,
To the little maiden yonder
 In the pew in front of mine.

On her father's kindly shoulder
 Rests her head of gold-brown hair,

And his loving fingers hold her
Close, at peace, contented there.

Now she leaves him for the present,
Looking up with tired zest ;
Then repents, and, oh, the pleasant
Thrill of sinking back to rest !

Now a while at peace she lingers,
After some soft reprimand,
While her slender little fingers
Clasp her father's great brown hand.

Now her little hand unravels
From her eyes a golden skein ;
Then, grown tired of its travels,
Finds its way to his again.

Now she glances round, and rather

Wonders what I'm staring at :

Well, if she does love her father,

What is there so strange in that ?

Dear old pastor, stanch and firm on

Doctrines sound as man can teach,

Here's another kind of sermon,

Better far than you can preach.

Dear old soul, who lay such stress on

Keeping sternly undefiled,

When you feel you need a lesson,

Take it from some little child.

You were steadfastly beseeching

Me to seek the narrow way ;

But it wasn't all your preaching
That has helped me so to-day,
For a little girl was teaching
All the things you didn't say.

FRIENDSHIP.

AUGUST.

KNEE-DEEP among wild carrots and long grass,
Looking across the meadow at the woods,
I stood, at peace ; for it was such a day,
So sweet, that avarice and shame and fear
Forsook my heart, and only love was left.
And all the trees were strangely beautiful :
Dark foliage hid the grim oak's twisted boughs,
His robe of state—the stern old forest king ;
The modest maple with compliant grace
Waved her fresh leaves, obedient to the wind ;
And not far off I saw the slim white birch,
A sylph by day—by night she seems a ghost.

Only the evergreens were dull of hue :
I scarcely should have known them but for that ;
For they were neither graceful, bright, nor gay,
But seemed like servants in a hall of state,
Forgot amid the court's magnificence.

NOVEMBER.

THE same ! No, no ! It cannot be the same !
This barren field, with brown, half-frozen turf !
Alas, how quickly beauty takes her flight !
One wave of those bright wings, and she is
gone,
And desolation grimly takes her place.
See those poor trees—or are they ghosts of
trees ?—
Waving weird arms, and casting leaves abroad ;

A few brown leaves, the wreck of summer time.
Only the evergreens, in verdant robes,
Shine out against the faded mass of brown.
The stubborn pine-tree rears itself on high,
Scorning the efforts of the foolish wind.
The melancholy hemlock waves its plumes,
And thrills all over with a sad unrest.
Ah, now we know how beautiful they are !
With head erect and uniform of green,
They seem like soldiers in a motley crowd.

PROSPERITY.

ONCE on a time, when Fortune smiled on me,
I sat and thought on my prosperity.
What have I done, to merit such reward?
For I have riches more than I can use,

And health, without which wealth were mockery,
And more than all, I have a host of friends
Who love me well, nor scorn to show their love
By countless little acts and pleasant words,
And kindly offerings of sweet courtesy.
Only a few old friends, of sober looks,
Make little protestation of regard ;
I scarce should think upon them but for that ;
For they are neither wise nor bright nor gay ;
They seem like veterans of an army corps,
Sure of themselves, but jealous of the rest.

ADVERSITY.

ADVERSITY has come to dwell with me ;
Adversity, the triumph of our foes ;
Adversity, the touchstone of our friends.

Deep have I sunk in unconcealed disgrace ;
Lost is my strength, my boasted health is
fled ;

Riches have used their wings and flown away,
And with them those I used to call my friends.

What have I done to merit such reward ?

How can I dare to trust in anything,

When those who seemed so true have proved so
false ?

Only a few old friends have not forgot

The days of old, when I was true to them,

And now they take my part against the world.

What do they care for danger or disgrace ?

They seem like veterans of an army corps :

The raw recruits have left them to their fate ;

But they have rallied round the flag they love,

And woe betide the foe that ventures near !

O Friendship, dearest gift of God to man,
We cannot know thee in prosperity !
Then welcome danger ! Blessed be disgrace !
For in the awful blackness that they bring,
True friends shine out like stars in winter
 nights,
And make the very darkness beautiful.

THE LITTLE LAME BOY AT THE
WINDOW.

Here from my chair I see them go,

The rich, the poor, the great, the small,

Under my window : they don't know

A little watchman sees them all.

These two are looking : aren't they queer ?

They—How do you do ?—I guess they say ;

They wonder why I stay in here

Instead of running out to play.

My two big brothers and the rest

Are playing there beyond the wall :

My brother Jack can play the best ;

You ought to see him curve the ball !

And when he makes a splendid play,
And I can help them raise a cheer,
My pains and troubles go away,
And I forget what keeps me here.

If I could just be well one day,
And go out too, it would be fine.
Well—I can see the others play,
And take their fun instead of mine.
I watch them here from up above ;
You see it's almost just the same,
I love them so ; and I can love
As well as if I wasn't lame.

TRUTH.

THERE is no life's companion like the 'Truth.

Bind it with close-forged fetters to thy side,

And guard it like the apple of thine eye,

Else it will flee away ; and men will say,

“Aye, so he says, but we believe him not.”

Then wilt thou call for Truth to come again :

“Ah, Truth, sweet Truth, I know thy worth at
last !

Come back again !” And then Truth will not
come.

TO MY LITTLE GIRL.

CLOSE to earth the sun is burning ;

 Weary ploughmen leave the plough ;
Homeward through the fields returning,

 All their work is ended now.

Hear the cattle gently lowing ;

 Hear the bleating of the sheep ;
All the world to rest is going—

 Sleep, my little darling, sleep !

Fishermen upon the ocean

 Turn their eager bows toward home ;
On they come, with rushing motion,
 Ploughing through the surging foam.

Hark, they sing with pleasure after

 Weary toils on waters deep !

Do not heed their shouts and laughter—

 Sleep, my little darling, sleep !

Off into the sea of slumbers

 Sails my darling little one,

While I sing in peaceful numbers

 Till the dying day is done.

While my loving arms still hold her,

 Evening shadows o'er us creep ;

Soft her head sinks on my shoulder—

 Sleep, my little darling, sleep !

SUNRISE.

WHILE the poor stars are dying one by one,
And light is creeping over hill and dale,
And all the eastern clouds, saddened and
pale,
Blush with delight to see the laughing sun,
Across the world my loving thoughts have
run,
To one who sits beneath a drooping sail,
And sadly sees the gloomy daylight fail :
His day is ended now, and mine begun.

While we see wealth and happiness increase,
Others there are whose sickly hopes fall
dead,

Whose honors leave them elsewhere to
go.

Oh, may their weary sun sink down in peace !

Not streaking all the sky with angry red ;

But calmly, with a quiet afterglow.

ELSIE ABROAD.

My own dear child, while far away you roam,
Beyond the restless blue Atlantic swell,
Sweet memories still linger on at home,
And make us love you more than we can tell.

Thoughts of your honest eyes and soft dark hair,
Your lips, that never say what is not meant,
Your smile, that carries sunshine everywhere,
Your life, so loving and so innocent.

All these we treasure while, perhaps, far hence,
You dream of us beneath some distant star;
But, lest we should forget an excellence,
Come home and show us what you really are!

A BIRTHDAY PRESENT .TO AN OLD
FRIEND.

THE loving reverence of your friends,
 . That is your greatest gift to-day ;
 Reverence that never fades away,
. Love that begins but never ends.

Aye, though the gorgeous sunset lends
 Its aid to make your birthday gay,
The loving reverence of your friends,
 That is your greatest gift to-day.

Dear friend, whatever fate God sends,
 If fortune smile, or hopes betray,
 Take this for comfort on your way :
With every joy and sorrow blends
The loving reverence of your friends.

MOTHER'S LOVE.

A MOTHER'S love, unselfish, pure, and deep,
Prompting sweet prayers for me, that I may
keep

Far from all evil ; when I stumble, fall,
And sin once more, she loves me through it
all.

Her smiles, her tears are mine, whiche'er I
will ;

I leave her home, her heart is with me still ;
And when she sleeps, for angels cannot die,
Her love lives on for all eternity.

TWO VISITORS.

LAST night, as I was dreaming of my wrongs,
I saw two figures standing by my bed ;
Cruel Revenge, with lofty countenance
Trying to make me think him Honor's twin ;
The other—when I looked upon his face
I thought that Heaven had come down to
earth,
And knew that sweet Forgiveness was his name.
And now Revenge's spirit-stirring tones
Thrilled through my senses, as he cried aloud :
“Come, take me in, and let me dwell with thee !
For I can fill thee with a godlike rage,
And give thee strength and fearlessness and
craft,

So that no bolt nor bar can interpose
To save him. Thou shalt pay him wrong for
wrong !”

And then Forgiveness knelt beside my bed,
Imploring me—and never have I heard
A tone so tender or a voice so sweet,
Clear as the holy bells of Paradise :

“I, too, can give thee strength and fearless-
ness,

And innocence, more wise than wisest craft.

Revenge can make thee hurt thine enemy ;

But I can give thee back thy friend again.

Oh, take me in, and let me dwell with thee !

Weary am I, for none will shelter me ;

And when I kneel and beg for harborage,

They strike me down and leave me there half
dead.

They do not slay me quite ; perchance they
feel

That they may need me on the Judgment Day."

Sweet friend, alas ! you knew not what you
did ;

And I was not without some share of blame.

Let by-gones be as though they had not been ;

Let sad-eyed Memory erase a page ;

You are my best, my dearest friend, and I

Forgive you—as I hope to be forgiven.

MARY.

HER rich dark hair flows back in waving lines,
Leaving no shadow on that faultless brow ;
Her face, her form, her everything combines
To make her pure ;—I almost see her now !

She is a queen. No matter when or where ;
She may be at her best or at her worst ;
There may be hosts of other women there ;
They may be fairer—she is still the first.

She is not gay, but full of serious grace ;
Seldom her mouth relents into a smile ;
But when a light does break on that grave face,
Dark earth seems Heaven for a little while.

She cannot compliment her friends above

The truth ; she has no smooth society lies ;

She has not very many friends to love,

But when she loves, she loves until she dies,

She has her faults ; she can be proud and
strange ;

And she must have her way, whate'er befall ;

And yet I should not like to see her change :

I want her what she is, her faults and all.

WHEN ELSIE SINGS.

WHEN Elsie sings, her notes surprise
The angels floating through the skies ;
And gathering round with wondering gaze,
They marvel at these earthly lays,
Tempting them down from Paradise.

It calls before my half-closed eyes
Faint and fast-fading memories
Of old and half-forgotten days
When Elsie sings.

Thought after thought takes wing and flies,
Called by those soft, strong melodies.

She sings—and off go time and space;
Self is forgot ; and in its place
Fair dreams of truth and love arise
When Elsie sings.

“BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT.”

THE morning sun came streaming through the
blinds,

And lighted up* long pathways through the
room,

And danced and played upon the nursery wall.

A little child was sitting up in bed,

Reading. It was the Sermon on the Mount.

“Perfect?” he thought. “Why, no one has
been that—

Not one ; and I shall be the very first.”

And twenty years went by. The noonday sun
Was beating down on the deserted streets.

Within the church the rustling of the fans
Seemed half to drown the preacher's droning
voice.

A young man sat and pondered on the text :
"So : 'Be ye therefore perfect,' And why
not ?"

And twenty years went by. The summer sun,
Piercing the elm-trees' lofty foliage,
Which swayed in the soft breath of afternoon,
Made varying patchwork on the velvet grass.
A man was sitting with a little child,
Reading. It was the Sermon on the Mount.
He stopped. "'Be perfect !' Father, what am
I ?

And yet, if Thou wilt grant me twenty
years——"

And twenty years went by. The evening sun
With level rays came streaming through the
blinds,

And lighted up long pathways through the room,
And floated up and down upon the wall
Within what used to be the nursery.

A man lay dying with the dying day.

“Ah! read me — read the Sermon on the
Mount!”

His daughter read it, slowly, solemnly,
The old man straining hard to catch each word.
Then, falling wearily upon the bed,

“It was so hard,” he cried, “so very hard!

O Father, Father, and it is too late!”

A ray of sunlight stole across his face,
And following the sunlight came a smile:
“Perhaps it may be easier over there.”

MY SISTER ELEANOR.

HER face has lost its girlish bloom ;

Much of its red has changed to white ;

And yet her presence in the room

Makes God's own sunshine seem more bright

She cannot jest, as bright folks do ;

She has no clever repartee ;

But what she says is kind and true,

And somehow that's enough for me.

She has no trials ; she alone ;

And so, lest nothing should distress her,

She takes our troubles for her own :

My own sweet Eleanor, God bless her !

TO H. B. W.

DEAR friend, to us the way seems very long
Before we join thee in thy distant home;
A weary way, and rough the road and steep;
And as we battle through this lonely world,
We miss thy loving words of sympathy.

To thee, a dweller in the halls of God,
Years are unheeded, decades count for naught;
Yet thou hast scarcely been assigned thy place
Ere thou art restless in thy new-found bliss;
Thy thoughts are with thy dear ones far away;
Thou lookest back across the stream of death,
Watching for us with prayers of love and hope,
And wondering where thy children bide so long.

Not long, dear friend, as Heaven measures time.

Only be patient for a little while;

Only a moment bow thy head in prayer;

Only a moment, and we follow thee.

MUSIC.

THE pedant scorns blithe songs with tender
words,

And cares for naught but harmonizing chords:

The genius feels the warm tear seek his eye

Because he hears a mother's lullaby.

A VENETIAN WALLFLOWER.

FLOATING along a quaint Venetian street,

An old, old woman, laid upon the shelf,

I felt how much life's bitter mars its sweet,

And foolishly kept thinking of myself.

While vanquished day its sunset banner furled,

I pondered o'er forgotten hopes and fears,

And thought perhaps too hardly of the world,

For patience does not always grow with
years.

High on the right there towered an old stone
wall,

Gay with a century's disregarded growth,

Where wallflowers held their gaudy festival,
Some red, some yellow, and some tinged with
both.

From out the crumbling stones, with flowers
arrayed,

A little window could my course command ;
And o'er the sill smiled a Venetian maid,
And leaned her pensive head upon her
hand.

Her softly lustrous hair as dark as night,
Her features lighted by a thoughtful smile ;
She turned her splendid eyes to left and
right,
And hummed an old Venetian air the
while.

Her brilliant cheeks and red lips just apart,
Lit by the low sun's slowly dying flame;
She sat so still she seemed a work of art,
With old gray stone and wallflowers for a
frame.

She saw me, and she seemed to know my
dower
Of grief and loneliness and selfish woe,
And with a sudden impulse plucked a flower,
And tossed it to me as I passed below.

The breeze had died away. The blossom
dropped,
Fluttered, and wavered: it was falling wide;
A tiny zephyr caught it up, then stopped,
And brought the flower directly to my side.

I feebly waved my poor old wrinkled hand ;
Her pretty features lighted up at this :
She said some words I could not understand,
And laughed, and threw me down a little
kiss.

And then somehow this dark world grew more
bright ;
And I could see, with dim eyes strangely
clear,
How grim old Time can smile in swiftest flight,
And sombre Fate forget to be severe.

I love to think that you remember, too,
Sweet girl, so far away across the sea ;
And while I wave this grateful hand to you,
Perhaps you throw another kiss to me.

TO HER WHOM I LOVE.

MADLY I struggle in the depths of night ;

My knees are trembling and my fingers numb ;
Stumbling and fainting in the desperate fight,
And longing for the help that will not come.

Ah, darling, if I might but see thy face ;

If I could only hear thy sweet voice speak,
Asking my help in this forsaken place ;
If I could see the tear upon thy cheek,

Then all this agony would pass away.

With thee beside me could I stoop to fear ?
I would not dread to face all hell at bay ;
Hell would be heaven if only thou wert near.

MOTHER.

YES, now I look, she has grown old—

I never noticed till to-day :

Her hair was once like dull red gold ;

I can't believe it's turning gray.

And oh, her sweet voice ! It was caught

From some bright angel ere her birth ;

And every time she sang, it brought

Its native heaven down to earth.

When I was settled for the night,

Out of my bed I used to creep,

And say I couldn't start just right

Unless she sang me off to sleep.

When angels, through the moonlight clear,
Came floating by on snow-white wing,
They used to stop and hover near,
To hear my dear old mother sing.

She had no rules, no style, no art,
No consciousness nor manner fine :
Her voice came straight from out her heart
And made its way right into mine.

Just now her voice is not so high :
She says it's lost its old sweet tone.
She will not sing when folks are by ;
Only to me when we're alone.

Then, when she breathes those old songs o'er,
Soft to my heart of hearts they creep ;

I'm in my little bed once more,
And she is singing me to sleep.

I feel no ghost can touch me here,
No pack of wolves, nor robber band,
While mother's song is in my ear,
And I can hold her dear old hand.

Dear mother, when these poets declare
That never yet was love so true
As with their passion to compare,
I don't believe they know, do you?

AN OLD STORY.

WE are not what we were, my friend and I.

We used to be inseparably joined,

Like two young pine-trees growing side by side

Whose branches are so closely interlaced

That they are grown dependent each on each,

And either would look marred and incomplete,

If some rude hand should hew the other down.

Did different interests tempt us different ways?

I cannot tell. Somehow we grew apart.

And now, when we are asked if we are friends,

We say, "Oh, yes;" and if you press us home,

Perhaps we say we are not what we were.

But if you ask us how it came about,

We shake our heads, for neither of us knows.

THE MIRROR OF A SOUL.

My love is like the midnight ocean yonder,

Reflecting every star that shines above :

No thought that into thy pure soul doth wander

But adds another glory to my love.

NIGHT.

NIGHT in her sable mantle clothes the world,

And folds it closely to her loving breast.

The gayly painted sunset flag is furled,

Its last tint faded from the darkening west.

Past is the tumult of the busy day,

And labor's ever-fretful voice is dumb ;

Anxieties grow dim and fade away,

And God seems nearer now that night has
come.

THE MAN WHO HESITATES IS LOST.

SLOWLY I muse, as I sit by the fire,

Watching the pale embers' flitting light ;
Watching the flames waver, lower and higher,
Wondering whom I shall call on to-night.

Shall it be Fanny, so happy and merry,

Always on deck, with a smile on her face,
Saying "You was" (ungrammatical, very),
Pretty lips moving as though in a race?

How about Ellen, so sober and stately,

Smiling a little, not laughing aloud ;

Straight as a reed ; she's grown handsome, too,

lately ;

Not feeling quite at her ease in a crowd ?

Shall it be Fanny or Ellen ? Still thinking,

Musing I sit, rapt in revery deep :

Slowly I nod, and my eyes begin blinking—

Fanny—and Ellen—Adieu !—I'm asleep !

MY AMBUSH.

I HAVE prepared an ambush for my love.
Before she left the house to walk abroad,
I stole before her through the dreamy woods,
And gave my orders to my trusty friends,
And even now they lie in wait for her.

See how she loiters down the forest path,
Making a perfect day more perfect still—
No wonder that the trees are beckoning !
Faintly I see her dress of lightest blue,
Appearing, disappearing, through the green—
Anon she wanders off and out of sight.

And now, when she is deep amongst the trees,
Lost in the silent heaven of the woods,

The viewless winds will be my messengers ;
The busy brooks will be my advocates ;
The idle stones, half buried in the moss,
Will tell her stories of love's endlessness ;
The still, sad lake, hemmed in by hostile trees,
Will say how deep and pure is love restrained ;
Even the silent moon will plead for me,
Seen through the swaying summits of the trees,
Floating all white before the sun goes down ;
Mindful of how I love it, mindful how
I threw it kisses when I was a child.

Then, when I see her coming back again,
I shall advance, and take her honest hand,
And look into her never lying eyes,
And ask her what the woods have said to her.

TO ONE WHO THINKS SHE LOVES ME
NOT.

ELEANOR, you are mine. Even when you said
You did not love me, yet you must have known
Of something then, now, after we are dead,
That makes us stand together and alone.
Slowly, resistlessly, against your will,
Some power, some law, some destiny divine
Is working on your heart of hearts until
You see, as I can see, that you are mine.

Eleanor, you are mine. I have no choice :
It is not what I hear or what I see :
I do not love your hair, your eyes, your voice :
I simply feel your soul was made for me.

I know of other women fairer far,
And far more wise, to whom I might
incline :

I care not how they look or what they are,
Whate'er they are, I know that you are mine.

Eleanor, you are mine. Try o'er and o'er
To break the chain that draws us every
hour !

The nearer that we come, we feel it more,
And even you must yield to such a power.

I know, alas, that I am not above
Others in charm ; I have no manners fine ;
I only have a heart brimful of love ;
Come to it, Eleanor, for you are mine.

EXPRESS AND ACCOMMODATION.

SPLENDID! Remarkable! Good Lord! Why,
 bless

My soul, but there's the Limited Express!
Nothing but parlor cars, I've heard them say.
Such speed! It fairly takes my breath away!
With screeching whistle, conscious of its power;
Heavens! It's going sixty miles an hour!
It must keep up to schedule time, you see;
Of course it can't stop here for you and me.

Well, here's a funny contrast! Oh, I vow!
Just turn around and see what's coming now!
After that fast express, what a sensation
To see this tired-out accommodation!

Shaky and old and marvellously plain—
Conductors can't feel proud of such a train.
These queer old cars—By Jove, it's slowing
down ;
The very thing to carry us in town !

Do you know Lee? Just now he's all the
craze ;

His splendid books have set the town ablaze.

His talents and his thoughts are not confined

To any few: he works for humankind.

And then his face, his strength, his manly
carriage ;

It's funny that he's never thought of marriage !

You've never met? Well, meet him if you
can ;

You never did see such a splendid man.

A man? A genius! Half a deity!

Of course he hasn't time for folks like
me.

I bored him once when I was^{*} out of work:

He couldn't help me—didn't like to shirk,

But he was busy then—a thousand pities!—

Writing upon the "Unemployed in Cities."

Rogers is just the opposite, you know;

He's wild to look at; wasn't made for show;

And absent-minded—only got one eye—

People are apt to smile when he goes by.

He says himself he's rather old for use,

And queer, without the genius's excuse.

He does strange things! That year that father
died,

And creditors would not be satisfied,

He brought a check—wanted it understood

He didn't give it, but the neighborhood.

Well, when to thank the neighborhood I went,

I found he'd given ninety-nine per cent.

He's strange, but then from all that I can hear

God's prophets always did seem sort of queer ;

And though perhaps that Hebrew grade was

higher,

I'd sooner see him round than Jeremiah.

TO AN UNNOTICED LADY.

I DID not bow when we two met

Last evening at the Somerset :

I turned my stupid back, nor knew

That you were hidden from my view.

I'm overwhelmed with deep regret.

My heart was sad ; my feet were wet :

I felt the need of friends, and yet

When passing by a friend so true,

I did not bow.

Foolish it is for me to fret

At what you doubtless have not let

Be any source of grief to you.

Perhaps I needn't feel so blue.

May I not hope that you'll forget

I did not bow?

ENGAGED.

I AM engaged. My heart no more
On random wings of love must soar ;
But, firmly fettered to one spot,
It must not move a single jot.
It's just a trifle of a bore.

Sweet other girls whom I adore,
I must not love you as of yore,
For, though you are a charming lot,
I am engaged.

Was I not happier before
That day I knelt upon the floor?

Nay, backward glances profit not :

I've asked for one, and one I've got :

I cannot ask for three or four ;

I am engaged.

WAITING.

WRAPT in the vestibule's dim light

I stand—these servants are so slow !

I wonder if she knows to-night

That she must answer yes or no.

I hardly think I ought to speak :

I can't suppose she cares for me ;

But then, those words she said last week !

Well, in five minutes we shall see.

I hear a step along the floor :

I rather wish I hadn't come !

Too late ! A hand is on the door :

It opens : " Is Miss Grace at home ? "

ELSIE AND THE OCEAN.

HERE in the window-seat am I,

The place where I most love to be,
And sometimes put my sewing by,
And watch my old, old friend, the Sea.

When once I left the Sea to go

Where through sweet vales cool rivers wind,
I felt a ceaseless lack, as though
My dearest friend were left behind.

I stayed, but stayed against my will

By lake and river, hill and glen ;
I could not be at peace until
I journeyed toward the Sea again.

And when it burst upon my view,
Beyond the peaceful plain below,
That ever-changing reach of blue,
I cried for joy, I loved it so !

The merchant packs up bale and sack,
And trusts them to my friend the Sea :
It bears them off upon its back,
And brings home profits gallantly.

Or, if it drowns 'some hapless bark,
If, rising 'neath the wind's fierce breath,
And hooded by the storm-clouds dark,
It flings the sailors to their death,

Then it laments its sad success,
When hungry waves are satisfied,

Regrets its angry heartlessness,
And grandly mourns for those that died.

Dear Ocean, sorrow without end
Is in your mighty soul confined :
Will you not tell your little friend ?
Who knows but it might ease your mind ?

The gloomy Ocean does not say ;
It will not stop to talk with me ;
But murmurs softly all the day.
I wonder what its grief can be !

AFTER THE FIRST SNOW.

THE sullen world of dust and dirt and stone

Is brightened by the snowstorm's simple art,

Like one that's dead, whose very faults are
strewn

With pure, pure love from out a mother's
heart.

A RESOLUTION.

I AM a coward : nothing is so weak,
So beggarly, or so contemptible
But I have feared it ; aye, and fear it yet,
When Memory lays her shadowy colors on,
And madly paints it in heroic size.
The salt of fear has tainted Life's repast,
And not one sweetmeat can taste sweet to
me :
The mist of fear has dimmed Life's spec-
tacles,
And how can I distinguish right from wrong?
The wall of fear has compassed me around,
And Honor waits for me and waits in vain.

Oh, I am sick to death of bitter fear !

By all that breathes, I will not fear again !

Devil or man, I will not fear again !

Though Satan's self and all the powers of Hell

Come storming round me till the air is black,

By Heaven I will not yield one foot of ground !

Though all the world call curses on my head,

And every curse be bitterly deserved,

I fear not curse nor hate nor right nor wrong !

Much have I sinned, and I shall sin again :

I shall deceive and lie and think base thoughts

And do base deeds and slander righteous men ;

But as there is a God in Heaven above,

And as there is an earth and sea and sky,

I will not fear : I will not be afraid :

Though I should die, I will not fear again !

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

ONCE, when my soul was dull and closed and
grim,

And I was tired of stern Life's endless
fray,

I met that man who died the other
day,

And, as he spoke, I felt through every limb

He was my master. From the horizon dim

Bidding me come, and pointing out the
way,

His spirit called : my spirit must obey.

You must be noble while you are with
him.

As some poor wretch from fortune's lowest
lurch,
Limping with downcast eyes through scorn-
ful crowds,
Watching the gutter water ripple by,
Comes suddenly upon a stately church
With lofty spire pointing toward the clouds,
And finds that he is gazing at the sky.

A CLERK IN A BANK.

MONTHS loiter past and long years die away
While he divides, subtracts, and multiplies,
Or looks about to rest his patient eyes :
For sixteen years he has not missed a day.

Oh what a blank monotony is his !

How can he bear to copy page on page,
While yesterday seems like some bygone age,
And hours go creeping past like centuries !

And yet, tired as he is, I envy him ;

Although each day is like the next and last,
Although he has no present and no past,
Though brain is stupefied and eyes are dim.

For he who does his duty is divine ;

And this man does it quietly each day ;

His work is perfect in its humble way ;

And I—I cannot say the same of mine.

MY FELLOW-TRAVELLER.

I KNOW a man ; and know him to my
cost ;

God never manufactured such a man :

A crafty, foul-mouthed, lying hypocrite,

Whose washed-out virtues make you hate him
more.

I pass him ; and I quickly shut my eyes

As if I passed some vile deformity.

I pass him ; and I haste to hold my
breath

As if I passed some rotting carrion.

I cannot think of him without a curse.

I hate him, and I wish he was in Hell.

Such were my thoughts, when, spent with angry
toil,

I flung myself upon my midnight bed,
And wished that sleep might never have an
end.

But other feelings came when in the East
The pale gray clouds had changed to burning
gold,

And, little messengers from God to man,
Light-hearted sunbeams burst into the room,
And made my eastern window look like
Heaven.

I hate him? Who am I that I should hate?
What have I done to raise me up so high
As to pass sentence on my fellow-men?
I never had a doubt that God loved me.

How arrogant of me to hate this man
Ten million times more near to equal me
Than I can ever come to equal God!

We must look much the same to one like
God :

Two disobedient weaklings, who prefer
To feebly quarrel and disdain and hate
Than to clasp hands and stand up side by side,
And recognize that we in one respect
Can be like God, that even we can love.

How can I dare to hate my fellow-man,
And all the while expect his Father, God,
To make no difference in His love for me,
When I have wished one of His sons in Hell?
Suppose that God should take to hating me!

No, no ! I cannot bear it !—This poor man
Is my co-traveller on life's miry track.
Mayhap he stumbles even more than I :
In faith he has a somewhat muddy coat ;
But I, God's love, am nothing over-clean.

I hardly care to touch him.—Yet I hope
That God will never cease from touching me.

Here, Brother, Fellow-Traveller, here's my arm !
Come, lean upon it. I am none too strong,
But better thus than grovelling in the mud.
Tread softly here ; beware yon precipice !
So ! Lean on me !

By Heaven, I should have fallen
But for that saving wrench from your true arm !

We seem to travel faster than we did.

Something has given me a stouter heart.

This warm, fresh current stealing through my
veins :

What is this dawning feeling? Is it Love?

ELSIE'S FATHER.

My father—it's no use to fret,

But soon my patience will be spent !

He's such a splendid man, and yet

They've never made him president.

Jack and I differed some time back

About the strongest man, or, rather,

The greatest fighter living : Jack

Said Hercules ; but I said Father.

As soon as war had well begun,

He went to fight, away down South.

I think it must be horrid fun

To charge into a cannon's mouth !

But he has such a noble air

That folks are eager to obey :

I think I'd go most anywhere,

If he was there to lead the way.

I told him so the other day.

He said, if Elsie with her gun

And cannon burst into the fray,

He thought the enemy would run.

Mother is nice, with lots to spare ;

But so is he ; and he has such

A way of smoothing down your hair,

He seems to like you awfully much !

He's Mother's sweetheart, true and bold,

He was mine too—a great while since—

But—I don't know—he's sort of old

And bald to be a Fairy Prince.

Now, Mother, Father's poem is done.

I'll only add this postscript :

He is

Nicest of all except just one,

And just about as nice as she is.

SUNSET ACROSS THE ICE.

ACROSS the heaven of the setting sun

A figure passes with a smile and nod,

As some dark vision through a prayer might
run,

And tempt the foolish soul away from God.

TO MARGARET.

IF I wanted a regular heroine

Who wandered about in shady dells,
And pined until she was terribly thin,

I'd probably go to somebody else :

If I wanted a soul as open as day,

Whose feelings I couldn't misconstrue,
Whose friendship was more in the "do" than
the "say,"

There isn't a doubt but I'd come to you.

If I wanted a creature without an opinion,

And never a thought in her cerebral cells,
With an amiable smile and an accent Virginian,
I'd probably go to somebody else :

If I wanted some one more solid than such,
Whose critical dictums were far from
few,

Who'd tell me my faults—a trifle too much,
There isn't a doubt but I'd come to you.

If I wanted a girl who was always pleased,
Whose glances were sweet as caramels,
Who'd pity me every time I sneezed,
I'd probably go to somebody else :

If I wanted a person of sense and nerve,
Who'd sympathize somewhat as stern par-
ents do,

Not a particle more than I seemed to de-
serve,

There isn't a doubt but I'd come to
you.

ENVOY.

My dear, if I wanted one of the belles,
I'd probably go to somebody else :
If I wanted a friend, and the best I knew,
There isn't a doubt but I'd come to you.

THE YOUNG MOTHER.

ONLY two years since that September day
When Phil and I, with hearts like buds in
spring,

Came wandering down the avenue of elms,
Full of each other's presence, half alarmed,
Silent, or else not knowing what we said,
Quick with the sense that something was at
hand,

Dreading to look each other in the face,
In Heaven because we felt each other
near,

Loving and loved, and Phil afraid to speak
Because he feared my answer, foolish boy !

I am so glad we named the baby Phil,
For now, when Phil has left me for the day,
I can tell all my thoughts to little Phil,
His father's stalwart representative,
As if he were his father ; and he smiles,
And laughs, and sometimes screams from sym-
pathy ;

Or else I sing to him. And so we make
The time seem short till Phil comes home
again.

What, darling ! Are your little eyes awake ?
For shame ! They know they ought to be
asleep !

Come, dearest, leave that sleepless little crib,
And rest within your foolish mother's arms.
Listen !

What shall my little darling be?

Perhaps with conquering flag unfurled
From victory to victory

He'll lead great armies round the world.
But do not hate the foe, my dear,

Nor frown as you are frowning now :
I will not tell you not to fear :

I think Phil's son would not know how.

What shall my little darling be?

Perhaps along some hostile shore,
With saucy pennant floating free,

He'll sail a stately man-of-war.
Then, dearest, when the shells fly fast,

Never give in to fortune's frown ;
But nail your colors to the mast

And fight until one ship goes down.

What shall my little darling be ?

Perhaps with firm controlling hand
He'll guide our country's destiny,

The greatest statesman of the land.
Oh, dearest, do not think alone

What is your country's interest then ;
But guard her honor like your own :

Nations have souls as well as men.

What shall my little darling be ?

Perhaps, inspired by passion deep,
And—what a piece of villany !

I do believe he's fast asleep !

A human soul ! A living, breathing man !
And how am I, an idle scatterbrain,

To guide him right, along life's labyrinth?
Poor me! I do not know a single turn!
"What shall my little darling be?" indeed!
Statesman, or sailor bold, or general?
I only hope he proves an honest man.
Why, the idea! A foolish child like me
To be a mother!

I should like to know
How much there is in this heredity.
He has my nose: has he my character?
I cannot bear to think of all my faults
Crouching around this harmless sleeping
child
Like grinning tigers just before they spring.
Can he not have his father's qualities?
His noble manliness, his love of truth,

With just a little silliness from me,
To smooth his passage through this stormy
world?

In those old days before we were engaged,
I used to think that I was fond of Phil ;
But that thin rivulet of calm regard
Was nothing to this moving sea of love,
Swallowing me up. You might as well com-
pare

The Mississippi River and the Charles.

That life of old was like a pleasant dream,
Real enough while I was dreaming it ;
But faded now, like distant scenery
When the regretful eyes are full of tears.
I scarcely think of those I left at home.

I have not thought of Father all to-day !
My love flows deep : alas, I sometimes fear
It narrows as it deepens. Oh, I think
My spirit is too small ! Like Phil's new barn,
When last year's harvest proved too plenteous :
It will not hold the love I want to feel.

What, my own dearest, waking up again ?

A PLAIN WORKING MAN'S IDEA OF
HEAVEN.

“WE know we are not worthy of Thy love :

We know, we know, we have not done our
best :

But when Thou takest us to Thee above,

Rest, rest, dear Father, only give us rest !”

Such is the song they sing : I cannot bear it !

All men must sin ; but no man needs to
shirk :

Show me some noble task and let me share it !

Work, work, dear Father, only give me
work !

Our thoughts of Heaven are surely wondrous
odd.

Just sitting still and praising God all day :
That would be hard indeed ; for praising God
Is more in what you do than what you say.

Poor weary weaklings ! Are we then so tired ?
Just fit to blow gold trumpets and feel
blest ?

To sit and smile and dream and be inspired ?
Can one life's work win everlasting rest ?

Oh shame ! Shall I give up my high endeavor ?
Shall I pretend my store of strength is
gone ?

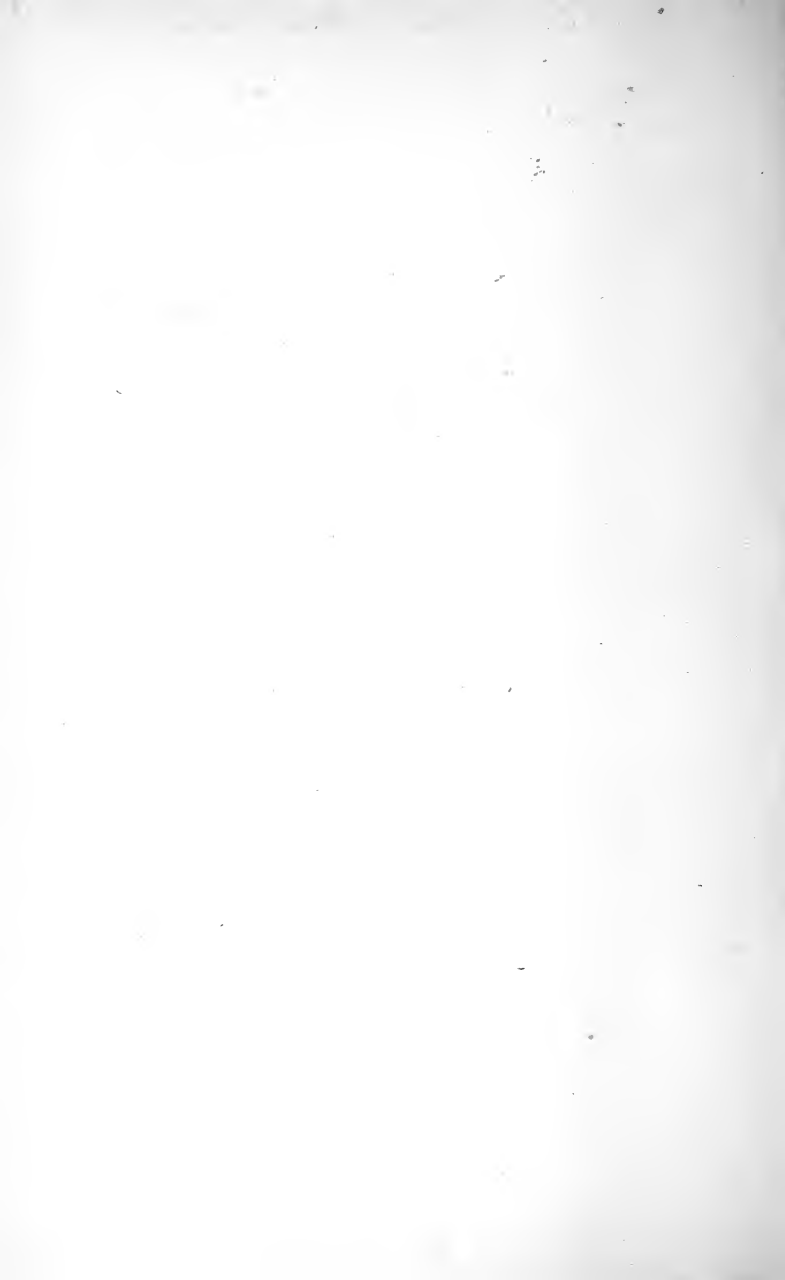
Shall I claim peace and joy and bliss forever,
And take my rest while God goes toiling on ?

Father, what future's mine I cannot tell ;

But when I have begun my life anew,
I care not where, in Heaven, or Earth, or Hell,
O Father, give me some hard work to do !

Forward along the road that He has given !

We cannot stay to count what strength we
spend,
Nor stop for rest in any idle Heaven,
For God's own work shall never have an
end !



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